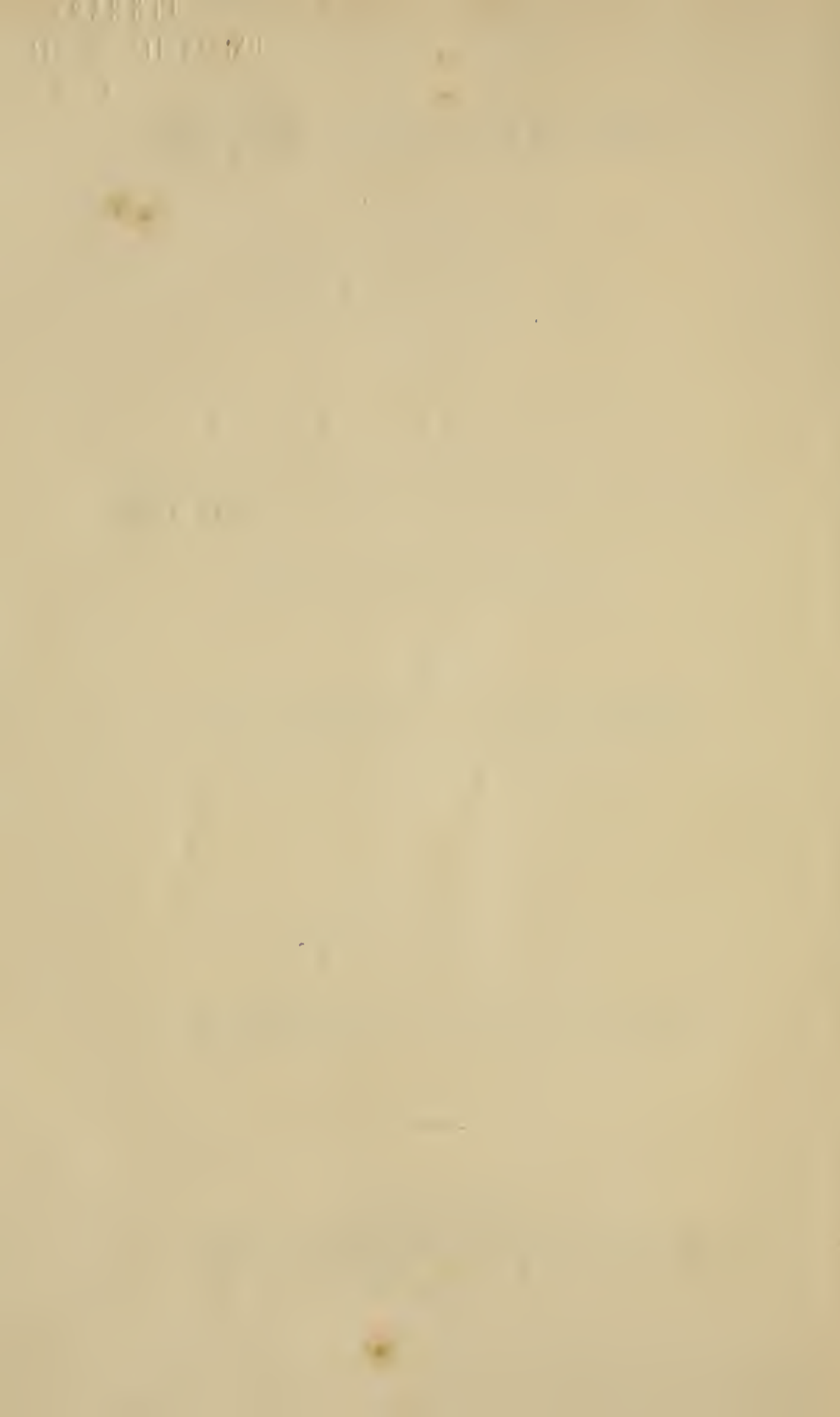






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From The Author 16

GOD'S REVELATION AND MAN'S MORAL SENSE
CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE
SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

ON THE

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 9, 1856.

BY THE

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THE UNIVERSITY.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR.

OXFORD,
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON:
JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER.

M DCCC LVI.

A SERMON,

§c.

HEB. ix. 11, 12.

“But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

EACH book of the New Testament implies the whole of the Christian scheme; yet each teaches its own lesson. One is the doctrine throughout; yet, as that unity of doctrine contains within itself variety, so each portion of Holy Writ more emphatically lays down and enforces one particular portion of the truth. Thus the Epistles to the Galatians and to the Ephesians, to take no other example, entirely coincident as they are in their teaching, yet dwell more specially each on different points of the faith; and so the Epistle to the Hebrews, from which my text is taken, will be found to contain a special lesson of its own. That lesson is the connexion between the dispensations of the Old and New Testaments, and more espe-

cially the position held by our Lord Jesus Christ in relation to the figures and types of the Jewish covenant. Thus it is pointed out that He was the great Prophet and Lawgiver typified by Moses, the great High Priest typified by Melchisedec and Aaron, the great Captain of Salvation typified by Joshua ; but most of all He is depicted to us as the great antitype, who was dimly foreshadowed by the Mosaic sacrifices, the one great predestined Victim to be offered by Himself, the true High Priest, the Sin-offering for the world, the Expiation for all mankind.

Thus Bishop Butler writes :—"The doctrine of the Epistle plainly is, that the legal sacrifices were allusions to the great and final atonement to be made by the blood of Christ, and not that this was an allusion to those^a."

Indeed, the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is the key, and the only key, by which we can understand the meaning of the system of Jewish sacrifices, and the prevalent practice of propitiatory rites among the heathen. Without this key all is perplexity and confusion ; with it, all is clear and comprehensible. Everywhere, throughout the world, we meet with the belief that two things are necessary for man, by which to approach his Maker : the one is Prayer, and the other Propitiation ; and the means by which this propitiation is to be effected is as universally held to be

^a Anal., part ii. c. 5.

Sacrifice. Thus much is an acknowledged fact,—acknowledged by all whose dogmatic bias is not so strong as to prevent them from accepting the plainest evidence of history. How are we to account for the fact? Among the Jews, we know that propitiatory sacrifices were established directly by Divine appointment; and further, we know, if we believe the words of Holy Writ, that such sacrifices were only efficacious, so far as they were efficacious, because they were the signs and types of the Sacrifice of the Cross. The origin of sacrifices in the heathen world is more uncertain. The more common opinion is, that they too were of Divine original appointment, and that they were propagated throughout the world together with the growth of mankind, as commanded at first by God. Thus Jones of Nayland writes:—"It was never thought, from the days of Cain and Abel, that there could be such a thing as piety to God without sacrifice. And the same holds good to this day. He that does not offer to God some sacrifice is not pious, but impious; his prayers are an abomination. But how could such a persuasion enter into the heart of man, otherwise than by revelation from God? No man could think that the shedding of innocent blood would take away sin, unless he had been originally told so on unexceptionable authority; so that the very existence of such a thing in the world is sufficient to prove that it came from revelation; and divines

think, with good reason, that it came in with the first promise in Paradise :—‘ The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head^b.’” And Bishop Butler :—“ Sacrifices of expiation were commanded of the Jews, and obtained amongst most other nations from tradition, whose original, probably, was revelation^c.”

If, then, the sacrifices of the heathen were appointed originally by God, we know at once their purpose. They were intended, like the Jewish sacrifices, symbolically to represent the efficacious Sacrifice of the Cross ; but let us suppose, as others have thought, that we have not sufficient grounds for believing in the Divine original appointment of heathen sacrifices ; still their existence would imply a universal sense of the need of expiation by sacrifice ; a craving of the great heart of mankind, which would indeed speak the voice of God, for the maxim is a sound one, ὁ πᾶσι δοκεῖ, τοῦτ’ ἐῖναι φάμεν. And thus they would in truth support the doctrine of the Cross in a somewhat different way, indeed, yet as strongly as though they had, like the Jewish rites, been instituted directly to shew forth His death until He came^d.

^b Religious Worship of the Heathens, vol. vi. p. 196. 1826.

^c Anal. ii. 5.

^d Professor Jowett, (Commentary, vol. ii. p. 478,) holds that the Jewish and the heathen sacrifices must stand or fall together ; both of them, or neither of them, must, in his opinion,

Now let us suppose a man unacquainted with the Christian scheme of salvation, as contemplating this universal fact of expiatory sacrifice. Surely he would be much perplexed by it. He would mark "the smoke of the offerings going up," and "the carcases of dead animals strewing the courts of the temples. It would be a sight scarcely tolerable" to him^e. He would say that there was no relation, so far as he could see, between "the death of a sheep and the pardon of sin^f." He would count the idea of propitiation strange, and the notion of efficacy in the vicarious suffering of a creature

have owed their origin to Divine appointment, and have had a typical meaning. It is not at all necessary to hold this "connexion between the heathen and Jewish custom of sacrifices;" but is not any one who does hold it, and who likewise professes a belief in the Old and New Testaments as a Divine revelation, bound to regard both as of Divine appointment? But Mr. Jowett does not so regard them: on the contrary, he ties the heathen and Jewish sacrifices together, for the purpose, as it would seem, of overthrowing the authority of the latter by the fact of the former. The Jewish sacrifices, he argues, cannot be held to have any other origin, or meaning, than the heathen sacrifices. The heathen sacrifices he then explains to have been performed with the following intent:—1. That the gods might feast as men. 2. Something magical, and to us unintelligible. 3. To express vague awe. 4. To abolish ceremonial pollution. Is it not beyond measure strange to see the idea of providing food to the Lord God of Hosts, the Lord Jehovah, thus attributed to the Jewish sacrifices by means of the middle term of heathen sacrifices, as would seem to follow from Mr. Jowett's argument? That the thing really signified by heathen sacrifices was "propitiatory atonement," is shewn by Abp. Magee in answer to Dr. Priestley, vol. i. pp. 83 and 166.

^e Jowett, vol. ii. p. 477. ^f Jones of Nayland, vol. iii. p. 227.

absurd. Then let him be taught the doctrine of the Fall of Man. Let him learn that once God and man walked together in the garden of the world as friends ; but that man had, in the abuse of his free-will, chosen evil instead of good ; that thenceforth his nature was corrupted by sin ; that he had severed himself from his Maker ; that God's face was turned away from him, and that however merciful his heavenly Father was, still that all that sinful man could deserve, and therefore receive, from Him who was the God of Justice, was punishment ; and that there was no power left in man to draw himself out of this unhappy state. Let him be taught this, and let him feel in himself the working of original sin, and then he would acknowledge that there was indeed need for propitiation ; that prayer was not in itself sufficient ; and he would search here and there for means of drawing nigh to God.

But still he would be perplexed. Why should this propitiation be in the form of a sacrifice ? How, he would ask, can the blood of bulls and goats cleanse away my sin, and make me capable of acceptance in God's sight ? True, I understand and feel that some expiation is required ; but why should not an offering of the fruits of the ground, or any act of self-denial on my part, be as efficacious as the blood-shedding of an animal ?

At this point declare to him the wondrous fact, that the Son of God condescended to come down

from heaven and to die upon the Cross ; open to him the doctrine of the One Great Sacrifice ; tell him, in the words of Scripture, that Christ is “ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world^g ;” that “ God set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood^h ;” that “ we are reconciled to God by the death of His Sonⁱ ;” that “ He redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us^j ;” that “ God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them^k ;” that Christ “ reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God in one body by the Cross^l ;” “ that He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world^m ;” that it was not really “ the blood of bulls and of goats” which “ took away sin,” but “ the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for allⁿ ;” that “ Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many^o.” Would there not be a flood of light thrown back upon his difficulties ; would he not confess that this did indeed make clear what was before perplexing to him ; that he had now been supplied with an explanation which

^g John i. 29.

^h Rom. iii. 25.—Professor Jowett translates *διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῇ αἵματι*, “through faith, by His blood ;” remarking, as his reason, that no such expression as faith in the blood, or even in the death of Christ, occurs in Scripture.—Vol. ii. p. 121.

ⁱ Rom. v. 10.

^j 1 Pet. i. 19.

^k 2 Cor. v. 19.

^l Eph. ii. 16.

^m 1 John ii. 2.

ⁿ Heb. x. 10.

^o Heb. ix. 28.

would, and which would alone, account for the phenomena which he had been studying?

It is a sore thing, which good men feel very deeply, that it is necessary from time to time to recur to, and to argue for, such a prime truth as the Expiatory Sacrifice of Christ,—the foundation-stone, without which the edifice of Christianity must fall headlong to the ground. St. Paul bids us not linger in such “principles of the doctrine of Christ,” as “repentance from dead works and faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment ;” which he calls “laying the foundations again,” instead of “going on unto perfection^p.” How much less, then, in that which is the foundation of these foundations, without which each one of them would be unintelligible and meaningless. Yet such necessity is sometimes laid upon us, and it is not without its advantages. Assured as we are of the soundness of our foundation-stones, we cannot fear from time to time to handle them, and try them, and exhibit their strength ; grieving only that they should serve to any as stumbling-stones and rocks of offence. In some such way as this God frequently brings good out of evil. It was the assaults of the Deists which called into existence the invincible corps of Christian apologists,—the Butlers, Berkeleys, Leslies, Paleys, and other writers, who proved incontestably the reasonableness of ac-

cepting Christianity, though itself above reason. It was the assaults of Priestley and the Socinian school which brought out Archbishop Magee's unanswerable work on the Atonement and Sacrifice of Christ. And so we may each of us learn to realize our Lord Jesus Christ more truly and vividly as our loving Saviour, when we have been led, by whatever circumstances, to the nearer contemplation of Him as the Great Sin-offering, who hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and by whose stripes we are healed.

It is especially the Cross—that is, the doctrine of the Sacrifice—which has ever been foolishness to the perplexed intellect of the world. Men will accept Christ in part of His character as Mediator. They will listen readily while they hear of Him as the revealer of God's will, as publishing afresh the law of nature, as enforcing pure morality by precept and example. They will accept Him, too, as the King, as well as the Prophet. Nay, they are not unwilling to acknowledge Him in part of His Priestly character likewise. He may be the great Intercessor—but when the Law, the Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles, with unfaltering voice and consentient testimony, represent Him as offering Himself a Propitiatory Sacrifice, and so making Atonement for the sins of the world,—this is foolishness to the world; it babbles about its reason or its moral

sense, and explains away the doctrine (as anything and everything else might be explained away) as a mode of Jewish thought or expression.

I would desire this afternoon, though well conscious of the awfulness of the subject, and the danger of handling it unworthily, to examine the plea put forward in the name of the Moral Sense. It is said that the doctrine of the Sacrifice is contradictory to the attributes of God ; for that, first, it is not in accordance with His Infinite Mercy to require a propitiation in place of granting a free and immediate pardon ; and, secondly, that it is not in accordance with His Infinite Justice to lay upon one the punishment of another's guilt. The first difficulty is summed up in the word *sacrifice* ; the second in the word *vicarious*. These are, I believe, the real difficulties felt ; and I would say, that the reason why I have selected them is not so much because they have been urged by any particular objector, as because they are the greatest difficulties that beset this portion of the truth ; and on that account, when our attention has been called to the subject, the most worthy of consideration.

I. In a cultured age, there are naturally found two classes of minds. Of one, Bishop Butler would serve as the type, who bowed his giant intellect before the Word of God, because piety told him that it was the religious, and philosophy that it was the reasonable, course to pursue. The other is not able so to humble itself, and deals with Revelation as its

superior, harmonizer and interpreter. The one accepts God's account of Himself, however much enveloped in mystery; the other creates its God according to its own conceptions, and rejects any acts or qualities attributed to Him by revelation, which militate against such conceptions, as "involving contradiction to the Divine attributes¹." Is the latter, I will not say the religious, but the reasonable, course to pursue?

1. In considering this subject, the first point to notice is this,—that God's nature must of necessity be to us incomprehensible. There are certain limitations to our faculties, within which alone, by a law of our minds, we are able to form positive conceptions. Whatever transcends those limits is to us incomprehensible. Not to dwell on other points, there are two conditions under which alone we have perceived, and we can therefore, correctly speaking, only conceive or realize the nature of a Being who exists under the same conditions. These conditions are Time and Space. But God exists under neither of these conditions. The attributes, therefore, of Eternity and Omnipresence, which yet none would deny belong to Him, prevent the possibility of our comprehending His nature, and conceiving Him as He is².

2. Next we must observe that there are ideas or

¹ Jowett, vol. ii. p. 482.

² See the Rev. H. L. Mansel's profound and valuable work, "Prolegomena Logica;" and also his pamphlet on "Eternity."

principles in our own minds which are apparently contradictory one to the other ; but yet we are unable to reject either of them, because we find them as facts in ourselves. Thus the idea of the necessity of an external cause for the production of actions, (on which the Necessitarian founds his system,) and the idea of the self-originating power of the will, (on which is based the system of Free-will,) seem to conflict with each other. Do we, therefore, conclude that they are *absolutely* contradictory, and therefore that one or other of them must be false? We cannot do this, because both of them are given to us by our nature. What then? We conclude that it is only *relatively* to our powers of apprehension that the contradiction exists; that while our minds are constituted as they are, the combination of these two ideas must be to us a mystery;—not, in short, that *they* are contradictory to each other, but that *we* cannot reconcile them. So, too, the idea of God's Omnipotence and Providence, on which the doctrine of Predestination rests, seems to conflict with this same idea of originating power as possessed by ourselves. Do we reject either? No; we acknowledge a mystery, and say, not that these ideas are contradictory, but that we cannot reconcile them.

3. Thirdly, the conception that we have of God, whether drawn from Scripture or formed by the mind, is necessarily and rightly that of a nature containing and made up of all perfections. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, All-merciful, All-good,

All-holy, All-just, All-pure, All-loving, All-righteous. All good qualities in their utmost perfection are attributes of Him. But can we reconcile these attributes in their infinite perfection one with another? Not so: we can take one of them, and follow it out, as it were, into infinity; but then it must exist alone,—otherwise, after we have traced it, so to speak, for a little distance, we find it impinging against one of the other attributes. What are we then to do? To cry out, Here is a contradiction? No; but to say thoughtfully, Here is to me a mystery: I cannot reconcile these two things, but I know that they are reconcilable, otherwise there could be no such Being at all as God.

Thus, we may grasp the idea of Omnipotence; we may draw a picture to ourselves of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, bowing down before the Almighty One. We can present Him to ourselves as ruling with sway uncontrolled, and none saying Him nay; as doing what He will, when He will, and as He will. But here we are, as it were, stopped. Can He do an act that is wrong? No; for All-goodness is one of His attributes, as well as Omnipotence. Shall we then say that He is either not Omnipotent, or not All-good? No; we acknowledge that there is, not a contradiction, but a mystery.

Or, again, we might take the old difficulty of undoing the past,—the

Μόνου γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται
 Ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἅσθ' ἂν ᾗ πεπραγμένα.

Can we reconcile this impotence with the perfect attribute of Omnipotence? We may throw together a certain number of words about the difference between Time and Eternity, and fancy that we have explained it, but the difficulty remains just the same. We have only explained why we cannot explain it. The truth is, that we do not limit Omnipotence by acknowledging the difficulty, but simply admit that our minds are not capable of grasping Omnipotence in its relation to a state of which we have had no experience.

4. Let us now apply the same line of thought to the two attributes of Infinite Justice and Infinite Mercy. We are able, more or less, to represent to ourselves the idea of a personification of Justice. We can conceive of an All-just Being dealing with every one according to his merits ; acting, as it were, by line and measure, from which He does not and cannot deflect ; dispensing reward to the righteous, and punishment to the guilty ; firm, unimpassioned, unbending ; ready, indeed, to receive the fallen to His favour, but only when the uttermost farthing has been paid, and the exact amount of satisfaction has been rendered.

Again, we are able, more or less, to represent to ourselves the idea of a personification of Mercy. We can conceive of an All-merciful Being, ready, willing, yearning to forgive, projecting Himself, as it were, from Himself, and starting forward to help the weak, to console the suffering, to lead the wan-

dering, to bind up the broken heart, to overlook the deficiencies of the unworthy, to put aside the sins of the guilty, to amnesty the past, to cover all under His wings, to gather all to His bosom, to wipe away all tears, and bid sorrow and sighing for ever flee away.

Separately, then, we may seem to be able to approximate towards a conception of the attributes of Justice and of Mercy; but if we try to combine the two ideas, we are utterly baffled. How can the righteous Judge cover the sins of the guilty? How can the loving Father refuse to gather His erring children within His arms?

Suppose, then, that Revelation represents God to us as the All-just One. What! exclaims the Moral Sense of the natural man, will you tell me of a God who cannot freely forgive the guilty? "Even a man's debt may be freely forgiven," and "we have not so learned the Divine Nature, believing that God, if He transcend our ideas of morality, can yet never in any degree be contrary to them^r." Suppose, then, that Revelation represents Him to us as the All-merciful One. What! exclaims the same Moral Sense, will you overthrow the foundation of law and right? Will you "sully the mirror of God's justice and overcloud His truth^s?" "Will you cast a shadow upon His holiness?" "How then shall He judge the world?" "We have not so learned the Divine nature." Suppose, then, that

^r Jowett, vol. ii. p. 472.

^s Jowett, vol. ii. p. 480.

Revelation represents Him to us as at once All-just and All-merciful. This can only be done in one of two ways : either by representing Him in one set of texts, and in one course (if I may so speak) of His acts, All-just ; and in another set of texts, and another course of His acts, All-merciful ; or else, by limiting the one attribute by the other. If the former is done, then the Moral Sense objects against the first set of texts, and the first course of acts, that they do not represent Him as All-merciful ; against the second, that they do not represent Him All-just. If the latter, then cries the Moral Sense, you do not represent Him as All-just, or All-merciful, at all, but as something which is neither one nor the other.

Thus we see, that *whatsoever* revelation of Himself God vouchsafes to man, it *must* be open to cavils brought against it in the name of man's Moral Sense. If it were not so open, it would be thereby proved to be false, because it would be representing to us a Being whose nature our minds could grasp, and whose attributes we could reconcile. I say, *in the name* of the Moral Sense, for it is not really that divine faculty which cavils and objects. The Moral Sense would be willing enough to confine itself within its own limits, and when taught by reason that it was dealing with the Infinite, which the mind of man could not comprehend, it would be ready to acquiesce in the existence of a mystery. It is not, I say, the

Moral Sense, but a subtle form of the “pride of human reason^t,” which refuses to acknowledge that the powers of the human mind, and its faculties, are not the guage by which everything is to be tried, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Would you span the heavens with your hand? Would you count the sands of the shore with your fingers? Would you hold the ocean in a water-glass? Each one of these attempts would be more wise, more reasonable, and more philosophical, than objecting to the revelation of the Infinite, because our finite minds cannot reconcile His attributes; and therefore, that His acts, of whatever nature they may be, are necessarily open to cavil, if cavil we will, not on account of the quality of the acts, but of our feebleness of capacity. When, then, we hear the doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Cross objected to in the name of Moral Sense, as “inconsistent with the Divine attributes,” let us recollect what the objection really means. It means this,—that while confessedly incapable of reconciling the requirements of Infinite Justice and Infinite Mercy ourselves; while forced to allow that any whatsoever revelation to man of God’s march of mystery must *seem* to conflict with one of these attributes or the other, not because it does conflict with either of them, but because of our own weakness of comprehension, yet we declare that we will reject that fundamental truth which Prophet, and

^t Jowett, vol. ii. p. 468.

Evangelist, and Apostle with one tongue proclaim, which has been accepted by all Christians in all ages as the basis of Christianity, because it *does* seem to us to conflict with one of those attributes ; the very thing which, if it were true, we had to expect, in consequence, not of the character of His acts, but of our limited capacity.

II. Almost all that I have said in reference to the supposed moral objections against the doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Cross as irreconcilable with Infinite Mercy, will apply, with little change, to the supposed moral objections against the doctrine of a *vicarious* Sacrifice as irreconcilable with Infinite Justice. On this point I must be very brief. The objectors whom Bishop Butler in his day met and refuted, declared that it represented God as indifferent whether He punished the innocent or the guilty. It will be enough for me at present to remind you of his answer,—how he points out “the extreme slightness of all such objections,” by shewing “that they conclude altogether as much against God’s whole original constitution of nature, and the whole daily course of Divine Providence in the government of the world,—that is, against the whole scheme of theism, and the whole notion of religion,—as against Christianity.”

“So that,” continues the religious philosopher, “the reason of their insisting upon objections of this kind against the Satisfaction of Christ, is either that

they do not consider God's settled and uniform appointments as His appointments at all, or else they forget that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day's experience: and then, from their being unacquainted with the more general laws of nature, or divine government over the world, and not seeing how the sufferings of Christ could contribute to the redemption of it, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical will, they conclude His sufferings could not contribute to it any other way. And yet what has been often alleged in justification of this doctrine, even from the apparent natural tendency of this method of our redemption,—its tendency to vindicate the authority of God's laws, and deter His creatures from sin,—this has never yet been answered, and is, I think, plainly unanswerable, though I am far from thinking it an account of the whole of the case. But without taking this into consideration, it abundantly appears, from the observations above made, that this objection is, not an objection against Christianity, but against the whole general constitution of nature. And if it were to be considered as an objection against Christianity, or considering it, as it is, an objection against the constitution of nature, it amounts to no more in conclusion than this, that a divine appointment cannot be necessary or expedient, because the objector does not discern it to be so; though he must own that the nature of the case is such as renders him incapable of judging whether it be so

or not ; or of seeing it to be necessary, though it were so^u."

I have here quoted the words of the author referred to, because they receive a double weight by the fact of their being the words of Butler—Butler, whose great calm mind surveyed, and estimated, and balanced all the objections which have been urged against the received doctrine of the Atonement, and after weighing them one by one, and all together, laid them aside as being "neither philosophy nor faith^x," while the doctrine of the Propitiatory and Vicarious Sacrifice was both.

I will but add, that the doctrine of Original Sin is open to exactly the same objection as the doctrine of the Atonement, and in equal degree ; and that St. Augustine, in answering the Pelagian's question,—“How is it just that other men should be liable to punishment for Adam's sin?” has in effect answered the difficulty, “How is it just that Christ should suffer for offences not His own^y?” A

^u Anal., part ii. c. 5.

^x Jowett, vol. ii. p. 481.

^y Professor Jowett rejects the received doctrine of Original Sin as well as the received doctrine of the Atonement. “How slender is the foundation in the New Testament for the doctrine of Adam's sin being imputed to his posterity,” (p. 162). “The language that he (St. Paul) here uses is that of his age and country,” (p. 165.) “It was a confusion of a half-physical, half-logical, or metaphysical, notion, arising in the minds of men who had not yet learnt the lesson of our Saviour, ‘That which is from without defileth not a man,’” (Ibid.) “Too little regard has been paid to the extent to which St. Paul uses figurative

mystery we acknowledge it, and as a mystery we accept it, but only such a mystery as the feebleness of our minds necessitates. In itself a deep, and profound, and, to other intelligences, it may be, an open and patent act, at once of Infinite Justice and Infinite Mercy, to us it necessarily is mysterious.

It may be said, Is, then, our sense of natural Justice no guide to our conception of the Divine Justice? Nay, it is *a guide* to it, but it is not the measure of it. It is a finger-post which directs us towards it, not the plummet which sounds its depths. The course at once of piety and of reason, is not to make our own minds, and the ideas of our own minds, the standard by which to test God and God's doings, but to accept Him as He has revealed Himself in His nature and His acts

language, and to the manner of his age in interpretations of the Old Testament. The difficulty of supposing him to be allegorizing the narrative of Genesis is slight in comparison with the difficulty of supposing him to countenance a doctrine at variance with our first notions of the moral nature of God," (p. 167). Here we have a specimen of Mr. Jowett's method, which appears to be—1. to submit the revelation of the Infinite to the test of his own finite capacity; 2. to reject whatever his moral sense chooses to object to; 3. to explain away what he has rejected as something which has arisen from the misunderstanding of figurative language on the part of interpreters, and from the use of the modes of thought the manners and the language of their age and country, on the part of the writers. For a masterly statement of the doctrine of Original Sin, see *The Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, by the Rev. J. B. Mozley,—one of the ablest theological treatises which has been written for many years.

to us, and *then* we may and shall see how wonderfully the Christian scheme does meet the difficulties of our moral natures,—how true indeed it is that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Let us then first mark some of those texts in which Scripture especially sets forth Christ as the Propitiatory Sacrifice for us:—"Justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God^z," writes St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins," in the Epistle to the Galatians^a: "Christ our Pass-over is sacrificed for us," in the Epistle to the Corinthians^b: "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," in

^z Rom. iii. 24.

^a Gal. i. 4.—Professor Jowett thus comments on this text: "When it is said that Christ gave Himself for our sins, or as a sin-offering, the shadow must not be put in the place of the substance, or the Jewish image substituted for the truth of the Gospel. On such language it may be remarked, (1.) that it is figurative; natural and intelligible to that age, not equally so to us . . . (5.) that expressions such as that which we are considering seldom occur in the writings of St. Paul . . . (6.) that in general, the thing meant by them is that Christ took upon Him human flesh, that He was put to death by sinful men, and raised men out of the state of sin,—in this sense taking their sins upon Himself."—Vol. i. p. 211.

^b 1 Cor. v. 7.

the Epistle to the Ephesians^c. The language of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the same throughout^d. “Who His own Self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” writes St. Peter^e; and again: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust^f.” “He is the Propitiation for our sins,” writes St. John^g. “This is

^c Eph. v. 2.

^d Heb. ii. 10, v. 9, vii. 25, ix. 11, 28, x. 4—10, &c.—Professor Jowett apparently rejects the Epistle to the Hebrews, not only as a work of St. Paul, which he is quite justified in doing, but as a part of inspired Scripture. I say *apparently*, because he has not expressed himself with the clearness which it was desirable that he should have used on so momentous a subject. In vol. ii. p. 476 he writes: “It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews that this reflection of the New Testament in the Old is most distinctly brought before us. There, the temple, the priest, the sacrifices, the altar, the persons of Jewish history are the figures of Christ and the Church. In the Epistles of St. Paul it is the rarity rather than the frequency of such images which is striking. It is the opposition, and not the identification, of the Law and the Gospel which is the leading thought of his mind. But in the Epistle to the Hebrews they are fused in one; the New Testament is hidden in the Old, the Old revealed in the New. And from this source, and not from the Epistles of St. Paul, the language of which we are speaking has passed into the theology of modern times.” And in p. 482: “We can live and die, in the language of St. Paul and St. John, without fear for ourselves, or dishonour to the name of Christ. We need not change a word that they use, or add on a single consequence to their statement of the truth. There is nothing there repugnant to our moral sense.” We can hardly doubt that these latter words are used with an exclusive meaning, and that Professor Jowett intends by them to put aside the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and probably of the Epistles of St. Peter.

* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^f 1 Pet. iii. 18.

^g 1 John ii. 2.

My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," says our Lord Himself^h. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," says Isaiah, in the spirit of prophecy. But why should I add more? From every book and every line of the Bible breathes forth the same truth. It is the foundation-stone of all that Christ taught, His Apostles preached, and Christians believe. Once more to quote Bishop Butler:—

"Christ offered Himself a Propitiatory Sacrifice, and made atonement for the sins of the world . . . And this sacrifice was, in the highest degree, and with the most extensive influence, of that efficacy for obtaining pardon of sin, which the heathens may be supposed to have thought their sacrifices to have been, and which the Jewish sacrifices really were in some degree, and with regard to some personsⁱ."

And again:—

"The doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that He taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is by what He did and suffered for us; that He obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life; not only that He revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that He put

^h Matt. xxvi. 28.

ⁱ Anal. ii. 5.

them into this capacity of salvation by what He did and suffered for them^j."

And when we have thus, on the authority of Revelation, accepted, and grasped, and embraced the great truth, that (in the words of our Church) He "truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a Sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men^k;" that "He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by the Sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world^l;" that "the offering of Him once made is that perfect Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone^m;" that "He suffered death upon the cross for our redemption;" and "made there, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole worldⁿ." When, I say, we have, on the authority of Revelation, embraced this blessed truth, then we may see how in fact our Moral Sense does bear witness to it, how our sense of justice, and our belief in His infinite love, are both satisfied, so far as they can be satisfied, by this instance at once of the goodness and severity of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of

^j Anal. ii. 5.

^k Art. II.

^l Art. XV.

^m Art. XXXVI.

ⁿ Communion Service.

God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been His counsellor. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things °.”

Christ hanging upon the cross for us ! It is our only hope, our only consolation, our only confidence, our only trust. “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. . . . But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ^p.” Every day during the next week the Church will bring before you, for reverent and loving contemplation, the form of the Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men, bearing our griefs, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and pouring out His soul unto death for us. One after another each Evangelist takes up the tale, and leads us on with him from the garden to the cross. Remember that we must be the better or the worse for each Holy Week as it passes : better, by God’s

° Rom. xi. 33.

^p 1 Cor. i. 22—25, 30.

grace, if we linger lovingly and reverently with Him, and watch the awful agony of that sinless soul, when He was enshrouded and enveloped in the sins of men, and His Father's face was for a moment turned away from Him, the child of Adam, on whom the Lord had laid the iniquity of us all ; worse, if we look on as cold spectators, speculating and criticising, instead of falling on our knees and worshipping ; or growing callous, as though the things which we saw and heard were but as the scenes and words of one of our childhood's tales, which now can stir the heart no more. Oh, brethren, that our hearts were with Him more constantly in His Passion ; that in our heart of hearts the image of Jesus crucified was more deeply impressed ! Surely, then, we should not fret, and fume, and toss wearily to and fro, as now we do ; we should not fix our affections on the wretched prizes that this world has to bestow ; we should not jostle one another in our course ; we could not be envious and jealous,—we could not be proud, revengeful, resentful ; we should recognise each other as brethren indeed, redeemed by the same most precious blood ; we should be more humble, more gentle, more considerate,—less cold, and harsh, and supercilious,—more worthy to be called the disciples of the Crucified, who for us endured that agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and that anguish on the hill of Calvary.

Brethren, we have much to be thankful for, but there is nothing which should call forth the thank-

fulness of our inmost souls like this act of wondrous love. We have much to be thankful for,—untold blessings of earth ;—He gives us, as He thinks fit, the strong limbs and the springing enjoyment of life, and the stout heart to bear up against misfortune. And He opens to us the gates of knowledge, and gives us entrance into the glorious world of thought and intellect ; and He gives us friends whom we may love,—some that we may help on, and cheer, and strengthen in their struggle with the difficulties and perplexities which oftentimes well-nigh appal the young heart, however gallant, as it buffets with the breakers that burst along the edge of life ; some to whom we may look up with affection and respect, and take courage from the knowledge that such persons live ; and some with whom we may interchange our thoughts and feelings, sure of a responsive sympathy. There is indeed no earthly blessing so great, no boon among all those that God gives to man, so precious as that of free, frank, brotherly love, when heart meets heart, and eye meets eye, with no selfish reservation, undeadened by lust, unhardened by worldliness,—unperverted by sophistry. And these, and many more, are blessings which God gives to us in this place with a free and open hand. But what are they, what is anything on earth, when compared with the gift which God gave us in His Son, and the reconciliation which that great Offering once for all effected ? Nay, it is on account of that reconciliation that we are able to

enjoy those other blessings. Now we are as sons, and may look up into the face of our Abba Father, and this creates a sunshine in the soul by which all else is illumined. Why should we not rejoice, like some high-spirited boy, (and what more touching, more beautiful spectacle?) who does not shrink from his father's eye, who tells him his joys and sorrows, and whose fear has been mellowed into tender respect by its combination with love? But what if the chastisement of our peace had not been laid upon Him? What if the expiation and propitiation had not been wrought? What if God's face were averted from us? Then how should we venture to enjoy the blessings which we now find along our path? Nay, rather would it not be our highest wisdom to go mourning all the day long, or to "cast ourselves down upon the earth, and put our face between our knees^a?" or to cry out with Moses, "If Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness^r;" or with Job, "My soul is weary of my life; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. . . . Thou huntest me as a fierce lion; . . . Thou increasest Thine indignation upon me. . . . Wherefore then hast Thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh! that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me^s;" or with Elijah, "make request for ourselves, that we might die and say, It is enough; now, O

^a 1 Kings xviii. 42. ^r Numb. xi. 15. ^s Job x. 1, 16—18.

Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers^t ?”

There is a deep moral in the account of the conversion of Justin Martyr, as it is made familiar to many of us by a living poet^u. We can see him, as he is there pictured, wandering forth along the shore of the sea, desolate, helpless, hopeless ; and the brightness of the sky, and the laugh of the ocean, did but add grief to his sorrow, for what had he to do with purity, and joy, and light,—he, the sin-stained, conscious of nought within himself but discord and disarray ? There was no chord to answer responsively to the joyousness of nature, and accordingly it only oppressed him with the more intolerable weight. We can see him as he threw himself down upon the shore, and burst into tears,—tears such as the strong man sheds in those few hours of agony which fall to the lot of most of us but once or twice throughout our lives. What shall lighten that oppression ? He had striven in the noble fervour of youth and manliness,—striven after holiness, truth, and beauty. He had said that he would cleanse his soul from all that defiled ; that he would cast out all that offended ; that he would fling around himself the atmosphere of light and love, and tune each jarring tone within him into harmony. And now all had failed,—his palace of beauty, which he fain would have raised, was dashed to the ground, the

^t 1 Kings xix. 4.

^u See the Story of Justin Martyr in Trench's Poems.

mirror of his soul was cracked and bedimmed, and what should now give him comfort? The riddle of life was too hard for him to read. What union between God and such as he? and what happiness to an immortal soul without union with God? From the verge of despair he was led back by the gentle words of wisdom of the old man who had been sent to him in his hour of darkness. And which of those words would it have been that would have roused the weary-hearted man from his wretchedness? Would he have been moved, if he had been told that "a great moral act had been done by one in our likeness," and that this was "an assurance that God in Christ was reconciled to the world^x?" Would he not rather have bid his teacher, who thus spoke to him, be gone, and not mock his misery with unmeaning words? But when he heard of the love of the Father in sending His Son; when he was told of Him that died upon the Cross for him; when he learnt that by His Sacrifice the full satisfaction for sin had been made, and the ransom effected, and that his soul might be washed white

^x "Not the sacrifice, nor the satisfaction, nor the ransom, but the greatest moral act ever done in this world,—the act, too, of one in our likeness,—is the assurance to us that God in Christ is reconciled to the world."—*Jowett*, vol. ii. p. 481.

I must express my entire inability to discern how any sober-minded man, with the Bible before him, or by the light of nature, could arrive at an assurance of reconciliation by reason of any "moral act" whatever, which is neither a "sacrifice," nor a "satisfaction," nor a "ransom."

in the blood of the Lamb,—then we can see his eye lighten and his brow relax ; the good news that he had yearned for was come, the pearl of great price that he had vainly sought after was found. We can well believe how different the face of nature appeared to him as he retraced his steps ; how the gladness of earth, and sky, and sea no longer oppressed him as something alien. He, too, could take part in their rejoicing, for he knew that he was reconciled, and brought nigh, and united to God by the precious blood of Christ.

There are two classes of minds that do not feel the sinfulness of sin, and have no sense of its burden. One of these is scarcely to be distinguished from the beasts that perish. The sow that wallows in the mire knows not and recks not that it is filthy ; and there are men who go on day by day committing sin and living in sin, and their consciences have become hardened and crusted over ; they know not and reck not of the hideous leprosy which they have superinduced upon themselves. The other is very different in appearance from the first. Upright, moral, self-controlled, its fault lies not in excess of passion, but in perversion of intellect. Men have been found who, being led astray in the mazes of speculation, have dared to pronounce sin to be only a lower form of good,—confounding thus the work of Satan with the work of God. To these men the doctrine of the Fall, and the doctrine of the Atonement, are alike foolishness :

their system does not need them,—nay, does not admit of them. Little as they themselves intend it, the main result of their work must be to encourage the natural man to cease from struggling with himself, and to erect an intellectual support for the brutish man to justify himself in going on still in brutishness.

There are likewise two states of mind in which the oppression of sin's sinfulness is appreciated. One of these is not a permanent state, for if continuous, it must of necessity lead to madness ; but it is a state which many have been conscious of passing through. There is a time in the life of many a man, when the sinfulness of sin makes itself felt in all its awful reality, and there is present no sense of expiation to say, Thou shalt not die. It is a time when the mystery of existence first sinks down on us, and we are perplexed and amazed ; when all about us seems unreal,—when the heavens are brass, and the earth iron, and men seem made for suffering^y, and all we

y “The dreary sickness of the soul
That falls upon us in our lonely youth ;
The fear of all bright visions leaving us,
The sense of emptiness without the sense
Of an abiding fulness anywhere ;
When all the generations of mankind,
With all their purposes, their hopes, and fears,
Seem nothing truer than those wandering shapes
Cast by a trick of light upon a wall,
And nothing different from these, except
In their capacity for suffering.”—*Trench*, p. 115.

know is, that there is a God far away, out of sight, above our heads, and that sin is reigning upon the earth,—sin within us, sin without us, all seems sin and disharmony,—and still there is conscience standing by, and telling us of righteousness, and goodness, and truth, and holiness.

But, blessed be God, neither is this the Christian frame of mind, though many a Christian has passed through it, as through the valley of the shadow of death. The Christian's lot is one of peace and gladness; for though sin abound, yet the expiation for sin has been made, and has been accepted; the power of sin is crushed, and its dominion destroyed. Be it ours, brethren, not to wallow in the filthiness of sin, not to explain away its sinfulness; nor, again, to be confounded by the horror of it; but while we go softly, sadly, tearfully, along our way, because we are sinners, let us still cherish in our heart of hearts that peace which the world gave not, and the world cannot take away; that peace which passeth understanding; that peace which arises from the consciousness of reconciliation and union with our Abba Father; that peace which our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ purchased with His own most precious blood, when He died for us on Calvary, the one accepted Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of all mankind, and of each one of us.

